because of existence of two toll plazas on 80 km. stretch of National Highway No. 8;

(b) if so, by when such toll tax recovery would be discontinued and if not, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the provision regarding recovery of cost in National Highway Act?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K.H. MUNIAPPA): (a) Yes, Sir. However, only toll/user free (not toll tax) is being collected.

(b) and (c) User fee is to be collected in perpetuity as per the National Highways (Fees for the use of National Highways Section and Permanent Bridge-Public Funded Projects) Rules, 1997 made pursuant to the National Highways act, 1956. These Rules also provide for toll collection at a distance less than 80 km with the approval of Central Government.

Ghazipur crossing on NH-24

3933. SHRI T.T.V. DHINAKARAN: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of heavy traffic at the Ghazipur crossing on National Highway 24; and

(b) if so, the action taken to ease the traffic in the area?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K.H. MUNIAPPA): (a) and (b) Ghazipur crossing is located on National Highway-24,widening of which in Delhi has been taken up in phases depending upon availability of funds and *inter se* priority of works.

Objections to bridge being constructed under Sethu Samudram Canal

3934. DR. K. MALAISAMY: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that an eminent Jurist and former Judge of Supreme

Court, Justice Krishna Iyer has objected to building of bridge of construction, at the Ramar Palam under Sethu Samudram Canal Project on the ground that such a move would be hostile to the Nation and would be detrimental to the territorial interest of India;

(b) the leading personalities who are expressing concern over the safety of Ramar Bridge demanding suspension of Sethu Project work; and

(c) the reaction and response of Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BALLU): (a) The matter has been reported in a section of the press, however, no representation from Justice Krishan Iyer, former Judge of Supreme Court has been received by the project authorities.

(b) and (c) Representations against undertaking the project have been received. However, there is no scientific evidence regarding the existence of any ancient man-made structure in the proposed Sethusamudram Ship Channel alignment.

Widening of NH-31 in Sikkim

3935. SHRI O.T. LEPCHA: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any project/scheme to construct two/four lane road on the existing NH-31 during the current year;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the action taken by the Central Government to widen the above Highway in the State of Sikkim?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K.H. MUNIAPPA): (a) to (b) 4 laning of NH-31 from Purnia (Bihar) to Chalsa (West Bengal) and Rakhaldubi to Jalukbari in Assam is already in progress as part of East-West Corridor and 4 laning of Banktiyarpur-Begusarai-Purnia has been included under